

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00230

DEPT PASS S/CL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN PFOR UK
SUBJECT: BRITISH VIEWS ON ECONOMIC SUMMIT

REF: LONDON 1894 (NOTAL)

1. AMID GROWING PRESS SPECULATION HERE THAT BRITAIN WILL HOST AN ECONOMIC SUMMIT IN APRIL, FCO HAS TOLD US UK OFFICIALS WILL NOT GO BEYOND THE PRIME MINISTER'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE GENERAL IDEA OF SUCH A MEETING UNTIL PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER MAKES HIS VIEWS KNOWN.
2. PRESIDENT GISCARD'S JANUARY 4 SURPRISE STATEMENT TO PRESS THAT UK MIGHT BE THE SITE FOR THE NEXT ECONOMIC SUMMIT MEETING HAS PREDICTABLY PRECIPITATED CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION IN THE BRITISH PRESS AND WRY REMARKS AT FOREIGN OFFICE. ARGUMENTS OFFERED BY PRESS FOR HOLDING THE
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MEETING IN LONDON INCLUDE FACT THAT UK OCCUPIES THE EC PRESIDENCY FOR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1977 AND THAT THE QUEEN'S SILVER JUBILEE PROVIDES A REASON FOR PRESIDENT CARTER TO PAY A CALL HERE IN HIS CAPACITY AS HEAD OF STATE. MEDIA SPECULATION ON A SUMMIT HAS BECOME INTERTWINED WITH GROWING PRESS ASSUMPTION THAT PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN WILL VISIT PRESIDENT CARTER IN

FEBRUARY. PRESS ARTICLES REPORT THAT PLANS FOR A SEVEN NATION ECONOMIC SUMMIT WILL BE AT THE TOP OF THE AGENDA AT THIS WASHINGTON MEETING.

3. THE UK GOVERNMENT IS GENERALLY SAYING VERY LITTLE ABOUT A SUMMIT MEETING AND FCO HAS TAKEN THE FOLLOWING PUBLIC POSITION:

- PRESIDENT GISCARD HAS MADE A PROPOSAL FOR AN ECONOMIC SUMMIT MEETING THAT HAS BEEN SUPPORTED BY CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT;
- PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN HAS PUBLICLY SUPPORTED THE GENERAL IDEA;
- THE PRIME MINISTER HAS TAKEN NO POSITION ON SPECIFIC SUMMIT-RELATED QUESTIONS SUCH AS TIMING, VENUE AND PARTICIPANTS; AND, THE UK GOVERNMENT HAS HAD NO BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS ON THESE POINTS.

4. WE HAVE HAD SOME DISCUSSIONS WITH FCO OFFICIALS TO FOLLOW UP OUR TALK WITH CALLAGHAN'S SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, BERNARD DONOUGHUE (REFTEL). THEY SAY THE UK WILL "SIT TIGHT" UNTIL CARTER MAKES HIS VIEWS KNOWN. HOWEVER, NO ONE IN FCO OR OTHER PARTS OF WHITEHALL IS DOING ANYTHING TO DISCOURAGE TALK ABOUT A LONDON VENUE.

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